RESTORATION REVIEW

THE TRUTH SEEKER

The wayfarer,
Perceiving the pathway to truth,
Was struck with astonishment.
It was thickly grown with weeds.
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"Well," he mumbled at last,
"Doubtless there are other roads."

—Stephen Crane

Volume 6, No. 1 **January, 1964**

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IS THE BIBLE THE BASIS OF UNITY AND THE GROUND OF FELLOWSHIP?

"That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3)

Recently here in Denton we had a private gathering of brethren from some six or eight different persuasions within discipledom. No one was assigned to make a speech, and there was no program as such. We simply met to be with each other and to exchange views, somewhat extemporaneously, regarding our divisions. It was good to see brethren together who hardly ever have any contact. Several prayers were voluntarily offered in behalf of a deeper sense of brotherhood and better understanding. A fine spirit prevailed throughout, and surely the majority of the 30-odd brethren that were present left with the conviction that there should be more of such crossing of the party lines that have so long kept us apart.

Most of those present had something to say, and since I listened instead of talked at this meeting (something I might well do more often!) I had opportunity to observe a basic thesis running throughout all that was said. regardless of the segment of the brotherhood represented. The thesis was that *the Bible is the basis of unity and the ground of fellowship.* Several "non-Sunday School" brethren stressed this point, holding up the Bible and saying something like: "The only way for us to unite is by coming together on this book."

An "anti-Herald of Truth" brother was most adamant in the claim that the restoration of fellowship is simply a matter of returning to the Bible. His counterpart, the "pro-Herald of Truth" brother, made it clear that he stands with the Bible and that the problem of our division can be solved only by taking what the Bible says. So it was in every instance where a brother proposed a solution: *let's take the Bible, for it is the basis of unity and fellowship.*

Here were brethren from a half dozen factions, so divided that they cannot recognize each other in their public assemblies nor have fellowship with one another, contending that the answer to partyism is to get together on the Bible. They were all sincere and well-meaning, each really believing that the way to unity is what he calls "going by the Book." They appeared oblivious to the fact that each one was simply imposing his own interpretation of the Bible upon the others. None could be so crude as to say, "When you see the Bible as I see it we can be in fellowship," but that is exactly what was meant.

The “non-class” man is not going to “fellowship” the “class” brother until he sees classes like he does, and he calls this *going by the Bible.* So it is with all the rest, each assuming that his understanding of the Word of God is the correct one, thus making *his interpretation* the basis of fellowship. This is partyism. This “let’s just take the Bible” attitude causes more division than it cures, for it cures none. All these years we have sung the same tune — “just take the Bible” — and all these years we’ve been dividing and sub-dividing.

The thesis that the Bible is the basis of unity is a questionable one, if for no other reason on the ground that Christians have never been able to agree on so much of what the Bible teaches. If they must wait until they see the Bible alike, they will never be united. We may argue that unity *is* possible even if seeing the Bible alike on all points is impossible. Those who contend that we *can* see the Bible alike are the very ones who insist that everyone else see it their way.

If it is the Bible that is the basis of unity and fellowship, then how is it that the primitive Christians enjoyed both unity and fellowship without having the Bible? The saints at Corinth had no New Testament to hold up as the basis of fellowship when Paul wrote to them: “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9) They were certainly in the fellowship, but the basis was the Christ rather than a book.

1 John 1:3 makes it clear that it is the person of Christ that is the ground of fellowship: “That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you. . .” John is speaking of a person. “. . . so that you may have fellowship with us.” Notice that fellowship is between *persons*, not things or doctrines. John adds: “ . . . and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

In view of language like this we have to conclude that fellowship was real and meaningful in the early church long before there existed what we call the Bible. While the Bible is the precious Word of God, and vital to our nurture as saints of God, and even to the enrichment of our fellowship, we go too far to suppose that the Bible constitutes the basis for fellowship. It would be better to hold up the Bible and say: “The *person* of the Bible is the basis of unity.”

As these good brethren in our Denton gathering held aloft the Bible as the ground of fellowship they invariably quoted 1 John 1:7: “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” To *walk in the light* is made to mean to *walk according to the Scriptures,* and once again we are entangled in the same fallacy. One is not “walking in the light” if he supports some cooperative enterprise like Herald of Truth or if he uses instrumental music in the worship of the saints. Each party man rejects his brethren from the fellowship because they do not see in “the light” the same way he does, whether it be classes, colleges, organs,

cups, or institutions. And so we all continue in our divided ways, protecting our factions by quoting and abusing 1 John 1:7.

One need not get out of the same passage to see what "the light" is, for 1 John 1:5 says: "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." As one follows John's use of *light* throughout his writings he can see that he is referring to the love of God that is given to us through the Christ. It would be correct to say, therefore, that the Christ is the light. Our Lord said: "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (John 8:12).

That the Christ is "the light" is further shown in John 12 where Jesus is talking of his departure from this world and says: "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light" (verses 35-36).

So what does 1 John 1:7 mean? It means that if we are Christians together, if we are all in Christ who is the light, then we are in the fellowship together. It is juvenile to argue that "the light" refers to the Bible or to the New Testament Scriptures, and that we must all understand alike and obey alike all that the Bible says in order to have fellowship. If that is true, then fellowship has never been a reality at anytime in Christian history, and it never shall be.

The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) will serve to illustrate the point. How much of the Bible did he have? He was reading from Isaiah and quite obviously had none of the New Testament Scriptures. How much did he know at the time of his baptism? Very little indeed insofar as Christianity is concerned. It was more a matter of what he *believed*, and his faith was in the Person of Christ. Was he in *the light?* Indeed he was; he "walked in the light" just as 1 John 1:7 says, but it was a *person* he had rather than a book. Was he not in the fellowship? Yes, he was, and that put him in fellowship with all others that were in the Christ, regardless of how much agreement or disagreement there might have been between them otherwise.

When the blessed Lord is made the basis of our oneness, then unity and fellowship are possible. When the correct understanding of a book is the ground, however precious and important the book, unity and fellowship will forever be beyond our reach. God gave the Christ to the world so that there might be peace on earth and goodwill toward men. The Christ unites men rather than divides them, and this is realized as men become "in Christ" together. It is when we together accept the Lordship of the Christ that we become brothers, and oh how precious that brotherhood should be!

Brothers in the Lord will have differences just as brothers in the flesh have differences, but this fact does not effect their brotherhood. Differences should, of course; be dissolved as this becomes possible, and error is certainly nor to be countenanced. But we are not to

wait until all errors are made right and all differences resolved before we practice brotherhood, for on that basis we will have parties instead of brotherhood. God loves me and makes me his own *in Christ* despite my many errors and shortcomings. We must love and receive each other as brothers *in Christ* — and treat each other as such — despite our errors. Once brotherhood is a reality the time will be propitious for the study of differences. — *Editor*

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THE PROFESSOR NAMED THE POINT

Recently it was my good pleasure to visit with Prof. W. E. Garrison of the University of Houston, who might well be referred to as "*the* historian of the Disciples." Our readers will know him as one of the authors of *Disciples of Christ: A History,* longtime a standard reference in American church history. Other of his many books include *Religion Follows the Frontier, Christian Unity and Disciples of Christ, The Quest and Character of the United Church,* and *Heritage and Destiny,* all of which relate to our own disciple background. All of us are indebted to Prof. Garrison for his labor of love.

He is certainly a remarkable man in so many ways. He once told me of how he rode a bicycle through Europe when a young man. He has been president or dean of at least two Christian colleges, and for a longtime professor at University of Chicago. He is now nearly 90, and during most of his retirement years he has been at the University of Houston, and I learned by visiting the Faculty Club that the distinguished professor is very highly respected by his colleagues. He is still teaching, defying both time and academic tradition. I once heard Prof. Henry Cadbury of Harvard (then in reluctant retirement) speak of Prof. Garrison as one who could still teach long after the usual retirement age. And that was several years ago!

I might add that the professor is also a sculptor of no mean ability, having done busts of several of the Disciple pioneers.

There was one question I wanted brother Garrison to answer: *How do you account for the many divisions among our people? Why have we divided so much, being such believers in the unity of God's people?*

Would he point to our lack of love or to our immaturity as a religious communion? Would it be psychological or sociological factors? Would it be conditions growing out of the early American frontier life that cradled our movement? Would it be the kind of leadership we have had, such as the role played by papers and colleges? Would it be the same things that have divided other religious groups?

Without any hesitation the professor put his finger on the point: *our divisions are the result of the supposition that the New Testament gives a minute and detailed pattern for the work, worship and government of the church.* He went on to quote Thomas Campbell, who said that the New Testament is as much a constitution for the New Testament church as the Old Testament was for the Old Testament church. Prof. Garrison unequivocally denied this as being valid. The New Testament Scriptures are not a constitution, he insisted, and they can never be made a detailed blueprint for the Church of Christ.

All such matters as to whether an elder must have a plurality of children since the Bible says *children,* or whether the Bible can be taught in classes since there is no mention of this in the Scriptures, goes back to the idea that the New Testament provides a blueprint for every dotting of the *i* and crossing of the *t* in things pertaining to the church.

I asked him if the Bible could be the basis of unity among all Christians. “Certainly not,” he said. Then what is the basis?, I asked. “The Lordship of Christ” was his reply.

He quoted the familiar text: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my pathway” (Psa. 119:105) and pointed out that many of us suppose that David was referring to the Bible, including what he was then saying! He observed how profound indeed is the expression “Thy word,” an expression that we might not be able to appreciate as did the psalmist.

His point was that the Bible came to us in parts and very slowly, and that even the *New Testament* did not exist as we know it today for several generations after Christianity became a vital force among the cultures of the world. There were many who died in the fellowship of the saints long before there was the *New Testament.* It was the Christ that made them one, and it is Christ that makes men one today. While the Bible reveals that wonderful Person to us, it is grossly erroneous to suppose that the Bible or the *New Testament* is a pattern or blueprint for the Church of God on earth. Christ is the pattern! The *New Testament* is thus to be viewed as a record of a noble effort to conform men and churches to the likeness of Christ. As we read of the struggles, successes and failures, tragedies and triumphs of men like Paul and churches like Corinth, we learn more about how to be like Christ.

Prof. Garrison has certainly given all of us something to think about. This journal is sent forth with the hope of motivating more of this kind of thinking. We see no other basis for unity and fellowship than the Lordship of Christ, and surely the view that makes the *New Testament* the pattern rather than the Christ himself is vulnerable. How often we have quoted Heb. 8:5 to prove that the *New Testament* is a pattern for the church just as Moses had a pattern for the tabernacle! But does the passage really suggest any such idea?

The congregation at Thessalonica had the pattern even though it had *none* of the *New Testament.* When Paul wrote two letters to them, they then had two pages of the *New Testament!* In 1 Thess. 1:14 Paul tells how the Thessalonian church became “imitators of the

church of God in Christ Jesus," and in chap. 4:9 he says: "Concerning love of the brethren you have no need to have anyone write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do love all the brethren . . ."

What then was the pattern for the Thessalonians since they were an old church, and perhaps even extinct, by the time the *New Testament* came along? *The example of Christ!* They knew how to love the brethren, for God had shown them what love is in giving his Son to die on the cross. They were emulating that love in reference to their brethren. Like the churches in Judea, they suffered for the sake of Christ, just as He had suffered for them. Christ was their pattern!

All that Paul taught them while he was with them was to make them more like the Christ. If he had not heard of problems that had arisen among them, which served as some threat to their peace in the Christ, he might not have written to them, and thus *Thessalonians* would not even be part of the *New Testament.* Likewise, there might never have been the Corinthian letters (and there is at least one we don't have anyhow) if Paul had not received unfavorable reports about the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:11).

We must see that Paul did nor write letters like *Thessalonians* and *Corinthians* in order to provide a basis for fellowship. Those people were in the fellowship by virtue of being in Christ. Many of them lived and died without having read any of the *New Testament* unless perhaps the letters the apostle sent to their particular congregation. We know that some of the Thessalonians and Corinthians had died even before Paul wrote to them (1 Thess. 4:13, 1 Cor. 15:18), which means their Christian lives were lived without having access to any of the *New Testament.* Were they therefore without a pattern?

It will be argued that these churches had the teaching of the apostles, and this is what we have, and so this is the pattern — the *New Testament.* But were there not things that an apostle would teach to one church that would not necessarily apply to another, and did not both Jesus and the apostles teach many things of which we have no record? See John 20:30-31 and 21:25. It is quite by chance that we learn of the special instruction, "If anyone will nor work, let him not eat," which Paul gave the Thessalonians in view of a particular problem. He says in 2 Thess. 3:10 that he had given them this instruction "when we were with you." Had he not seen fit to repeat what he had already taught, we would have not known of such a command. It is likely that some of the other churches would not have known of such instruction since they did not have the problem that called it forth. How many such commandments and exhortations might have been given to the churches that we know nothing at all about?

All this means what? These churches were in the fellowship because they were in Christ, who is the pattern for their lives. Exhortations and commandments given by the apostles, whether written in letters or given orally, were for the purpose of preserving the fellowship that already existed, and to instruct them how to live in Christ. Part of this

teaching we have, and only a small part at that, and we should use it the same way they did — as information as to how to live in Christ and for Christ, but not as a detailed blueprint. The *New Testament* just doesn't have that character.

Even if no *New Testament* book had ever been written, the church would have had its pattern just the same. The pattern was the image of Christ. The letters they received may have sharpened this image and deepened their sense of fellowship and brotherhood, bur the pattern was already a Person and never a book. And so with us. Our pattern should be personal rather than literary. — *The Editor*

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HOW WOULD YOU PLAN A UNITY MEETING?

"I do not pray for these only, but also for those who are to believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one." (John 17:20-22)

Because of this tender prayer from the lips of our Lord, as well as for other good reasons, all of our people believe in unity. No one advocates that we should continue in our divided ways. It is agreed that something should be done. We all have to face the cold reality that we are a terribly divided brotherhood. Some of the estimates of our many divided segments among Churches of Christ-Christian Churches run as high as twenty-five.

Think of it, twenty-five divisions among the heirs of the Restoration Movement — a movement that emerged from a burning desire to unite all God's people!

It may not be too much to say that we talk about unity more than any other people yet practice it the least. We are strong in denouncing division, but weak in correcting it even in our own ranks. We must confront the ugly fact that *division is a work of the flesh.* Gal. 5:19 begins with the sober words: "Now the works of the flesh are plain . . ." And the plain fact is that *party spirit* is listed as carnal along with idolatry and drunkenness. It is the party spirit, not the mere fact that we have differed in our beliefs, that has splintered us into so many factions.

But no one among us upholds the party spirit and no one would claim to be a party man, even though our divisions continue to be perpetuated. Indeed, new factions are presently being formed, adding even more confusion to an already fractured brotherhood. Yet we all go our separate ways, each of us vowing that unity is good and partyism is evil. We all agree that something should be done, but so very little is done.

A few of us here and there, representing many of the groups among Churches of Christ-Christian Churches, have sought *action* toward uniting our people in what has come to be called *unity meetings,* These gatherings have brought brethren together who had previously enjoyed almost no contact with each other. Men who could not "fellowship" each other to the extent of even calling on each other to lead a prayer were in these meetings not only praying and singing together but also listening to one another. Without even one exception these unity forums have been blessed with a fine manifestation of brotherly love. Brethren have proved to themselves that they *can* come together and discuss their differences without hard feelings resulting.

Unlike debates, which have proved to be an ineffective device in promoting better understanding, these fellowship forums have encouraged hundreds of us to treat each other as brothers. It is one thing to acknowledge a man to be a brother or even to call him brother, but something else to *treat* him as a brother. These gatherings give us opportunity to treat each other as brothers.

In the unity meeting in Dallas, for instance, a number of brethren that we call "premillennialists" were present, representing a segment of some 150 congregations that are virtually shut off from all the other Churches of Christ because of our party ways. It was a new experience for these brethren to sing and pray and study with the "a-mills," and especially to have opportunity to explain what the premillennial hope means to them and how it is related to unity and fellowship. We have *fought* each other over premillennialism for so long that it was refreshing to see brethren make an honest effort to *understand* a separated brother's point of view.

At that same gathering there were the anti-Herald of Truth brethren and the pro-Herald of Truth, known variously as "the Guardian group" and "the liberals" or "the anti's" and "institutional brethren." These saints of God have only in recent years become separated, but even though they still call each other brethren, they have quit treating each other as such. Even though they arc brothers in Christ together, they cannot so much as speak to each other's congregations (and often not even to each other) or even call on one another to pray to the heavenly Father. It was good for us all to see these brethren in the same building together!

There were still others at the Dallas meeting: both the conservative and liberal wings of the Christian Church; non-class elements; one-cup and cups brethren. To the one-cup element the "cups brethren" are those who do not have Sunday School (as they do not) but do use a plurality of cups. Those who have both Sunday School *and* plurality of cups they call "Sunday School brethren." Well, whether that is clear to you or not, all these persuasions were represented, and they were all downright decent to each other.

At such unity gatherings as those at Dallas and Denver an effort was made not only to bring divided brethren together, but to discuss the differences and to explore the causes of our separation. Hours upon hours have been given in these meetings to such subjects as the nature of fellowship, the meaning of unity, the causes of our division, heresy, gospel and doctrine, baptism and fellowship, who is a Christian?, institutionalism, premillennialism, instrumental music. No subject is barred; no brother is denied opportunity to speak. The meetings are free and open, restricted only by time.

Nearly everyone, if not everyone, that has attended one of these efforts has hailed it as a good thing. Even those who came to scorn have remained to pray. Once a person sees the sweet reasonableness that nearly always prevails, and especially when he witnesses the oneness that obtains despite wide diversity of opinions, he cannot help viewing it as a constructive effort. It is difficult to argue against love and brotherhood.

Regardless of all this, and the picture drawn here is a fair representation, these unity meetings are adamantly opposed by most leading brethren in the Churches of Christ. Not only will they not attend or take part, they even discourage others from attending, and in some cases they apply pressure to make sure their people do not have anything to do with such gatherings. By means of both press and pulpit they are on record against these meetings. The reasons they give for their opposition are not always clear, and when they are clear they hardly seem valid in reference to the kind of unity effort we ask them to support.

Their objections are something like this: these unity meetings constitute a compromise with error and false doctrine; they “water down” doctrinal differences rather than dissolve them; they imply that we are to overlook doctrinal error and “fellowship” anybody and everybody, that doctrine is not important anyhow; these unity meetings call for a mere “union” of brethren who are in error, and they ask us to endorse things that are wrong so as to have fellowship with each other, which amounts to loyal brethren having to endorse sin and error.

The purpose of this article is not to examine with any detail such objections. It is enough to say that these evaluations are both untrue and unfair. One only needs to attend such unity efforts to see that such objections are wholly baseless.

The purpose here is to invite such brethren to present their plan for a unity meeting. We got up some meetings and invited them, so let them get up a meeting and invite us. Since they readily admit that brethren ought to unite, then what program do they offer towards solving our problems in long division.

If they object to such appellations as “unity meeting” or “fellowship forum,” what would they choose to call it? Whom would they invite? What procedure would be followed? What subjects would be discussed? How would the meeting be advertised? What would the purposes be?

Those of us who sponsored these unity meetings have been censured on all these points. Then let them show us a better way. We urge the editors of *Gospel Guardian, Firm Foundation* and *Gospel Advocate* to present an editorial on "A Proposal for a Gathering of Our Divided Brotherhood" or some such title in which details are set forth as to what such a meeting would involve. We shall be glad to pass the editorial along to our own readers.

If there is an acceptable way to have a unity meeting, we want to know what it is. If some of us who have initiated these meetings are the wrong ones to be doing it, let that be pointed out. If our selection of subjects to be discussed have been the wrong ones, then tell us which ones would be acceptable.

Is it all right if our divided brethren come together simply to pray for unity and for each other, as did our Lord? May we sing with each other and talk with one another? Can we discuss our differences and seek to understand each other better? What? Where? How? Who? Since you don't like the way we do it, and yet you admit that it is imperative that something be done to realize our Lord's prayer, then you tell us a better way.

Until this is forthcoming is it unreasonable of us to ask that you take a more sympathetic look at what we are trying to do? — *the Editor*

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TRUTH SEEKERS' FORUM is a monthly feature of RESTORATION REVIEW conducted for the purpose of stimulating study and thought in matters pertaining to Christianity. It is our purpose to give fair and honest consideration to every idea which comes to our attention, that we might extract from it all that is of spiritual value. No subject which bears upon Christianity is inappropriate, no question is closed, no position is considered unworthy of a hearing if sincerely held by any brother. You are invited to respond in writing to the things which appear in the FORUM, whether negatively or positively. We will use short articles and letters or sections of these. Pen names will be used to avoid the emergence and interference of personalities, since these only hinder the quest for truth. We do ask that, if you write, you write in love. We will not publish material which contains sarcasm, slander, ridicule, or which deals in personalities. The ideas discussed in the FORUM may be very important to some of God's children. Please treat them with courtesy.

Your FORUM editor is Curtis H. Lydic. Material and letters should be addressed to him at 1703 Loop 288, Denton, Texas.

THE TRUTH SEEKER

The wayfarer,
Perceiving the pathway to truth,
Was struck with astonishment.
It was thickly grown with weeds.
"Ha," he said,
"I see that none has passed here
In a long time."
Latter he saw that each weed
Was a singular knife.
"Well," he mumbled at last,
"Doubtless there are other roads."
— Stephen Crane

What can we say of the genuine truth seeker? I say *genuine* because we know that many are professed lovers of the truth who behave toward it in a rather fickle way. Nearly all who make any show at all of Christianity claim dedication to the truth, freely quoting, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free," "Buy the truth and sell it not," etc. Some who so commit themselves orally have in mind perhaps that which they already know or think to be true as "the truth." It is possible for a man to talk reverently of "the truth," meaning nothing but that of which he is already convinced. This man thinks of himself as a truth seeker, but actually this is deceptive. What he actually is, according to his conception, is a *truth possessor.* He is not seeking truth, for he believes he already has it.

But, what can be said of the *genuine* truth seeker? First, that his object is truth; and second, that it is something which he does not already possess. Truth is an elusive concept to define. Pilate asked, wisely, "What is truth?" For the Christian, the meaning of truth is inextricably bound up with God's revealed will. With reference to many specific things, we are unsure of God's will. We seek to determine what God's thought would be so that we can feel assurance. We want to be right; some of us because we feel that we must be right to insure our salvation, others because we look to the Lord as an ideal and want to conform to that ideal. In either case we have ample motivation for a continuing, tireless search for evidence which would help to define God's will.

Not everyone has this motivation. Some are more interested in status, human approval, friendship, or influence (all very closely related things) than in conformance to God's will. Naturally, a conflict of motives will result in a contrast in behavior. One may occupy a religious position which is characterized by a number of specific "articles of faith" in which he has very little real interest. His occupancy of that position may be due to an interest in certain benefits, such as those mentioned above. When one of these articles is challenged, his first inclination would probably not be to defend it, but the maintenance of his position might call for its defense, so he might make a show of resistance to its critics.

This resistance, however, does not necessarily involve logic or even argument of any kind. It might take the form of refusal to argue or discuss the matter. It might involve hostility to those persons who oppose his ideas, hostility expressed in insult, ridicule, and aspersions upon sincerity or character. It could even involve deliberate misrepresentation, for if one is committed to any cause more than to the truth, he need not be expected to stick to the truth at the expense of that cause.

It must always be acknowledged that no Christian is in a position to ascertain the sincerity of another, and the points raised here are not meant to be used as any sort of guide for any such judgement. We should all give thanks to God that we do not have the responsibility to make such judgments. Let us rather use the above comments to examine ourselves.

But, again, what of the genuine truth seeker? Probably no better example of the truth seeker can be found in the scripture than that of the Bereans, of Acts 17:11. They listened eagerly to what was being said, not because they were eager to accept it, but because they were interested in its *possibilities.* They were eager to *hear* it and to *examine* it. Such is the attitude of the genuine truth seeker. He is not reluctant to go to considerable trouble to find the truth, either. The pearl fishermen of the South Seas, I am told, dive to great depths and stay underwater for long minutes without aqua-lungs, to collect the oysters. Then they must spend considerable time prying open the rough, sharp oyster shells to look for the pearls inside. Only a very small percentage of these oysters have pearls inside them. Yet these men go to such trouble, and the only reason is that they know the value of that for which they search. So, desiring that precious object, they continue.

Surely, if we truly understand the great value of God's will for us, we will be likewise dedicated to the quest for a better understanding of it. Will we be as the Bereans or as the wanderer of Crane's poem?

CONCERNING FELLOWSHIP

A good deal of the current emphasis upon fellowship is too narrow. Fellowship is defined as the relationship of brother to brother in the family of God. It is said that two Christians, since they are in the family, are in the fellowship, and cannot get out of it

without getting out of the family. The validity of the use of the word “fellowship” as a verb is questioned, and perhaps rightly so, in view of the use to which it is actually put. But there is an aspect of fellowship which, I believe, is being neglected.

Besides the essential fellowship enjoyed by all the saved, there is a more specific fellowship which involves participation with someone in something else. This may be work, or it may be a position, or it may be in some less serious thing such as play. One who plays golf with me is a *fellow* golfer. One who believes, with me, in immersion is a *fellow* immersionist. Thus I may not have fellowship in some specific things with one who is indeed a fellow Christian, and I may have some fellowship with a person who is not a fellow member of God’s family at all. I may recognize the fellowship which I share with another Christian while refusing to have fellowship with him in a specific activity. This is my right, and the right of every other Christian.

This does not, however, justify refusing all fellowship in specific things with one who disagrees on one or two of these. A general neglect of fellowship denies brotherhood, and denies Jesus’ prayer for unity. Paul said that we should receive one another in spite of such specific differences, not to endorse the thing which we disapprove, nor to participate in it, but to *exercise* our brotherly love and take advantage of fellowship in every other way possible. The current problem as regards fellowship appears to be a problem of neglect for a great deal of fellowship which we could be exercising and enjoying without sacrificing any of our principles.

COUNTING THE CHRISTIANS

The elders and deacons of the congregation which this writer serves recently attended a city-wide Church of Christ breakfast. They heard from the featured speaker the startling news that until just a few years ago there were “no Christians in Connecticut.” They took no offense toward the speaker; he was, after all, simply using the jargon of our religious group. But the wry amusement which his preposterous statement afforded them was a measure of their maturity.

We are no longer able to count the Christians in the world by studying the church directories of the Churches of Christ. Such incredible comments as, “There are now 500 Christians in India!” leave us with a pained realization of how blind party pride can be. Our Restoration leaders would not have talked like this. They preferred saying: ‘We are not the only Christians, but we are trying to be Christians only.” They wanted to unite the Christians in all sects. Obviously they felt there were Christians in the sects who could be united.

Our plea for unity today rings a bit hollowly. We cannot legitimately plead for Christians in all sects to unite, because we believe there aren’t any really proper ones except those inside the Church of Christ. There is enough division inside that particular

party, however, to keep all of us busy for a generation. If we can unite the Christians within the Churches of Christ, split as they now are into some ten to twenty factions, we shall do a noble work indeed.

A friend writes his objections to a packet of promotional material for a certain radio-television program, in which this statement appears: “Ninety per cent of the Christians in the entire world are concentrated in the Southern states.” As the friend properly points out, Christianity has made extraordinarily poor progress in its two thousand years of existence if ninety per cent of its adherents live in the southern United States. And when one realizes that the writer really meant specifically the two and a half million members of the Churches of Christ make up that ninety per cent, the comment reveals itself as an amazing grotesquerie. With the world’s population exploding toward four billions and the population of the United States alone exceeding 180 millions, Christianity has made paltry progress indeed if only the Church of Christ membership can be called Christian. Yet this is precisely what the writer of that oddly bigoted statement meant. And he probably wrote it with pure un-self-consciousness. It was meant for party eyes and it simply never occurred to him how it would look to a non-party man.

But perhaps there are some other Christians in the world who have never heard of our branch of the Restoration movement. And perhaps there were some Christians in Connecticut, even before 1950. No members of the Church of Christ, perhaps. but still enough Christians to keep the state from being absolutely pagan up until a decade ago.

This criticism is not trifling. Socrates warned his disciples long ago that false words can infect the mind. A greater Teacher knew it too. It is worth while to call attention to misuse of language, because so long as pronouncements like the one above continue we shall only be confirmed in our party sectarianism. We need not give up a single understanding we hold in order to recognize the valid Christian commitments of some who differ from us. Comments intended to fix the number of Christians in Peru or Phoenix, Argentine or Alaska, ought to be regarded as puerile and blind, and scoffed out of existence. — *Robert R. Meyers,* 867 Spaulding, Wichita, Kan.

I DARE YOU!

I say “dare” in a kindly way, for I only intend to get you to think about a serious condition among our people. *I dare you to act and think for yourself!*

Most of us think like the crowd. We are conformists. Even though we do not ourselves really believe that instrumental music, or classes, or pre-millennialism are matters of grave enough import to separate brethren, yet we go along with *our party* by rejecting each other over such issues. Are we really honest when deep in our hearts we wish to act one way, while outwardly we behave in another way just to satisfy some “loyal” preacher?

I dare you to step out and express yourself in such a Forum as this one, for it might give you the courage of your convictions once you have said it, even if in anonymity. Say it!

Most of us do not believe a lot of stuff that has so long been poked down our throats: such as our being the only church, or being the only Christians, or having all the truth — or that only "our" preachers are *gospel* preachers. Then why do we sit back like cowards and encourage such childishness. Let's declare ourselves to be free men in Christ. I dare someone among us to start a Freedom Crusade by declaring his independence of a burlesque religion that is always giving easy answers to momentous questions.

Let the crusade begin here and now. I will start it by declaring myself a free man in Christ, trusting that God will give me the courage to act like one more and more. This time I will speak Out under the protective wings of a *nom de plume.* Maybe later I'll have the gumption to cross my Rubicon with my name written clearly — and let come what may. But that takes more courage than I have right now, for I have seen what happens to people who cross party lines, and I don't want to be "withdrawn" from. So, for now at least, I am still a coward. — *Philonous*

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OFFICE NOTES

This journal was published on quarterly basis for five years before it became a monthly with this issue. There have been, therefore, twenty quarterly numbers in all. Of these twenty back issues we still have ten available. Some of these are 64 pages and some 32 pages in size, and they have been selling for 50 cents each. We will send you all ten back numbers for $3.00 while they last, or any three for $1.00. Back numbers have a way of going fast, so order at once if you want any of them.

In order to get our monthly *Restoration Review* into more hands we will continue to offer the journal at the club rate of 6 subs for $3.00 until further notice. We will appreciate your help in this regard.

Alexander Campbell and Thomas Jefferson: A Study of Two Old Virginians by Leroy Garrett is a monograph (32 pages) that we are sure you will enjoy. It is suitable to hand to anyone interested in American history, and you might thereby create in them some interest in what Alexander Campbell was trying to do. 50 cents per copy.

Raccoon John Smith by Louis Cochran is available at $4.95. This is not only an interesting story of the famous pioneer Kentucky preacher, but likewise an account of frontier America and the sturdy individuals that molded the wilderness into a great nation.

We have a number of reprints that we can supply at ten cents each:

Church of Christ Colleges: Is anything Wrong? by Robert Meyers

What Happened in Wichita by Robert Meyers

Fruit In His Season (a thought-provoking story by a woman who went to the Episcopal Church after half a lifetime in the Church of Christ)

The Unique Contribution of the Campbells to Christian Unity by Louis Cochran

A Study of the Modern Pastor System by Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garret (the authors names do not appear on the booklet)

You like the NEW RESTORATION REVIEW, *don't you? It is now being issued on monthly basis, with cartoons and forums and short, crisp articles. How about a helping hand in giving us a wider circulation? The subscription rate is so low that you can afford to send us a long list of names, enabling you to have a part in our ministry. In clubs of six or more the price is only 50 cents for each name for the entire year. Send us a club at once, so that the names can be added for the next mailing. Thank you.*

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